

# 2003 SESSION REVIEW



**Rep. Dan Roach**

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## 31<sup>st</sup> Legislative District

Dear Friends,

The 2003 legislative session benefited the taxpayers of Washington, families who need jobs, and the employers who provide those jobs. At the end of the 2003 regular legislative session in Olympia in April, lawmakers adjourned with a \$360 million tax increase on the table and very little to show for our push to create new job opportunities for Washington's working families. Our goal from the start of the session was to create jobs, make the state more competitive in order to recruit and retain businesses, and to restore the public's trust in government.

To gain the trust of those we serve, we knew government was going to have to share in the challenges of these difficult economic times. Facing a \$2.6 billion shortfall, it was not an easy task, but we recognized that families have been hurting too.

During the two special sessions that followed, lawmakers devised a bipartisan operating budget requiring no burdensome new taxes. That's \$360 million Washington taxpayers won't be paying this year, and into the future.

As always, we welcome your questions and concerns regarding legislative issues. We are also happy to assist you in your dealings with state government. Our job is to serve you, as well as represent you, so please contact us if we can help.

Sincerely,

Rep. Dan Roach

Rep. Jan Shabro



**Rep. Jan Shabro**

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## Creating a better economy and jobs for families

The 2003 session produced substantial reforms to improve our state's business climate and encourage employers, such as Boeing, to invest and expand job opportunities in Washington:

- Significant new investments in our transportation infrastructure and efficiency reforms to give us the most for our tax dollar;
- Tax incentives for new aerospace investments to entice Boeing's 7E7 assembly to Washington;
- Three important laws that change our state's water policy and help growing cities by offering greater flexibility to respond to local needs;
- Reforms to the state's costly unemployment insurance system;
- And reforms to our state's workers' compensation systems to ensure fairness and predictability.

We all want excellent schools for our children, affordable health care for our families and seniors, and protection of our open spaces and pristine natural environment. A healthy, diversified and robust state economy will help us achieve our quality-of-life expectations. We still need to do even more work to continue to strengthen our economy and stimulate job growth, but the accomplishments of this session have finally put us on the right course.

## Responsible budget allows state to live within its means

With our state facing the worst economic recession in a generation, we felt it was imperative that the Legislature not place a greater burden on taxpayers in our state. With a state budget deficit approaching \$3 billion, we insisted that government establish priorities and then make the tough choices to achieve those priorities while living within our means, just as families must do. It would have been irresponsible to raise taxes on families in our state, many of whom have lost their jobs or taken cuts in pay.

In the end, a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers adopted a no-new-tax operating budget that focuses limited resources on our most pressing priorities and protects services for the truly needy. The budget allocates a little more than \$23 billion for state government operations through June 2005. The budget avoids drastic cuts in services for developmentally disabled and troubled youth. It protects health care services for children living at up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level, and provides a 75-cent-per-hour pay raise for home health care workers.

At the same time, the budget reflects our continued support for K-12 education, which is state government's paramount constitutional duty. It provides pay increases for teachers in their first seven years on the job, when they are most likely to abandon the profession. The annual starting pay for Washington teachers will climb to \$30,000 in the budget's second year. Also, funding under Initiative 728, the class-size initiative passed by voters in 2000, will climb to \$254 per student, from \$212. Total K-12 funding will increase from \$5,367 per student to \$5,469 per student.

While the budget turned out about as well as it could have for Washington taxpayers, there are things we would still like to improve for teachers, local government and others. We're committed to addressing those needs when our economy is better suited for making such investments.



## Better health care for all but there's still more to accomplish

The Legislature had some wins in its effort to provide quality care to more people in Washington, but there is much to be done to make health care more affordable and available to all.

Lawmakers made a step in the right direction by passing prescription drug legislation designed to save the state money when it purchases medications for people who rely on government funded health coverage. It's disappointing, however, that House Republicans' push for senior prescription drug assistance—that would have done even more to help seniors get the medicine they need but can't afford with a true benefit—was halted. Now it will be everyone's responsibility to monitor progress associated with this new law that did pass to make sure it really helps. There is still more we can and must do for our seniors and that work should occur next session.

Another victory this session can be found in new effectiveness and cost-efficiencies for government health coverage. Reforming and redesigning the Basic Health Plan—that offers subsidized and nonsubsidized health care coverage for low-income people without any federal funding—will make it more affordable to cover more Washingtonians (100,000 enrollees) without continued cost overruns for taxpayers.

Important changes to medical malpractice and small group health insurance, as well as the state's Medicaid program in the area of reimbursements to doctors and hospitals, are still needed. These are particularly important to 31st District residents. Too many government mandates make health insurance too costly and force more lower- and middle-income workers to go without coverage. Small-group reform is still needed to help employers offer affordable coverage to their employees.

The price of insurance that doctors and hospitals need to protect themselves from multi-million dollar lawsuits is too high. Medical malpractice insurance reform is needed to bring down the cost of insurance, keep physicians in practice, and reduce the overall cost of health care.

# 31st DISTRICT REVIEW

## Local Capital Budget projects

We passed a final capital budget in the 2003 legislative special session that secures and brings home more than \$3 million in the following investments in the 31st District:

- \$54,000 for the Enumclaw Plateau Historical Society;
- \$127,000 to develop Phase One of the Enumclaw trail;
- \$250,000 for the Auburn YMCA;
- \$235,225 for Buckley Skate Park;
- \$1.4 million for Green River Gorge land acquisition;
- \$750,000 for the Buckley to South Prairie Foothills trail.



## Protecting our water, land and air while preserving jobs

This session we worked to ensure that the integrity of the state's Western Water Law is maintained, that existing water rights of Washingtonians are upheld, and that proper planning is put into place to ensure continued water resources are available.

One new law will ensure water right holders will not have their water rights taken away because of water quality issues. The measure also provides increased penalties the Department of Ecology may impose to allow them to enforce water quality laws rather than prohibit the legal use of water.

Another new law allows cities (i.e. municipal water providers) to "grow into" their water right without being required to first put it to use. Many cities that have not used their full water rights in the past are now having a difficult time providing water for their growing populations. It also requires graduated conservation measures to ensure a plentiful supply of water.

To protect our supply of clean, usable water for the future, we passed legislation to implement a statewide planning process for watersheds. More wins for residents of the 31st District include avoiding park closures and mercury cleanup.

Legislation that did not ultimately become law includes a bill to replace or add a well without having to apply for a transfer or change application, and the bipartisan passed bill that would have clarified language to allow the use of body-gripping traps for nuisance animals and wildlife-population controls (the governor vetoed it).

The quality of life we enjoy in Washington should not be a battle of the environment versus jobs. We believe both can and should coexist through a balance of proper and responsible management.

## Transportation projects slated for the 31st District

The following projects are expected as part of the transportation package passed this session:

- \$1,906,000 for safety improvements to SR 161/SR 161 eastbound ramp;
- \$4,700,000 for road widening project from 36th to Jovita Blvd;
- \$9,000,000 for road widening project from Jovita Blvd. to S. 360th;
- \$18,000,000 for SR 410 to widen road from 214th Ave. E. to 234th

## Rep. Shabro's first bill signed into law will provide more funding for local transportation projects

Signed by the governor May 11, House Bill 2033 requires all revenues raised by a Regional Transportation Investment District to be allocated proportionally to member counties based on the amount of tax revenue generated. The money raised must be used for the benefit of the county in which they are generated. Not only will this new law help provide our region the tools to fix our roads, it will also help to restore the public's trust by giving Puget Sound residents something tangible for their taxes.

# 31st DISTRICT REVIEW

## We'd like to hear from you!

If you have questions or ideas about issues being addressed by the Legislature, we'd like to hear from you. Please provide the information below. You may also contact us directly via e-mail at:

**roach\_da@leg.wa.gov or shabro\_ja@leg.wa.gov**

Also, we are out and about in the community attending events, meetings and the like. Feel free to let our offices know of any meetings or events that are scheduled to occur and for which you'd like our attendance or participation. We're always interested in your opinions and questions and look forward to seeing many of you soon!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ and/or

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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